

MINUTES
Special Session of the College Park City Council
Council Chambers
Tuesday, February 19, 2013
9:35 p.m. – 10:02 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Fellows; Councilmembers Wojahn, Kabir, Dennis, Catlin, Stullich, Day, Afzali and Mitchell.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Joe Nagro, City Manager; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Chantal Cotton, Assistant to the City Manager; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Josh Ratner, Student Liaison.

During a regularly scheduled Worksession of the College Park City Council, a motion was made by Councilmember Wojahn and seconded by Councilmember Afzali to enter into a Special Session to address several state bills that are time-sensitive. The possibility of a Special Session was advertised on the meeting agenda. The motion carried 8 – 0 – 0 and the Council entered into the Special Session at 9:35 p.m.

Action Items:

13-G-18 Approval of a letter in support of HB 337/SB 514 – Natural Gas – Hydraulic Fracturing - Prohibition

A motion was made by Councilmember Wojahn and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to send a letter in support of HB 337 and the crossfiled senate bill, SB 514 which propose to ban the practice of hydraulic fracturing in Maryland.

Councilmember Wojahn said there are a lot of uncertainties about hydraulic fracturing and the impact it would have on our health and environment. We should ban hydraulic fracturing until we can be sure that it can be done without harm to public health. He outlined the potential dangers associated with the practice.

Comments from the audience:

Suchitra Balachandran, 9320 St. Andrews Place, representing the CBE: The CBE submitted a letter to the Council in support of these bills. She outlined their concerns: Each time a well is fracked, it takes 1.8 M gallons of water, and 400,000 gallons of chemicals, and the chemicals that are used are unknown. The fracking process does not fall under the Safe Drinking Water or Clean Water acts. Only 30 – 50% of the water that is used is recovered; the rest can pollute our groundwater. This process is happening without oversight from any federal agency.

Grace Sweeney, UMD Senior, Intern, Food & Water Watch: Her group supports the bill to ban fracking at the state level. She discussed potential health hazards that have resulted from fracking in Wyoming and Texas.

Councilmember Catlin is opposed to this bill to ban fracking. He believes it is premature. He doesn't believe anybody in the legislature from western Maryland supports this ban. A previous request to study the process was never funded. There is no discussion about restricting the

consumption of fossil fuels. If Maryland doesn't produce the natural gas, it will be produced by surrounding states. Saying that you can't produce the energy doesn't mean you reduce the consumption.

Councilmember Wojahn said we are already starting to see some impacts of fracking around the state, so this is not premature. We are taking steps to reduce our own energy consumption, and the governor is pursuing wind energy. This is just one part of an effort to make our energy consumption more environmentally healthy.

Councilmember Afzali is concerned when we take a stand on an issue that benefits people who are not in our area. However, he does agree that we have a vested interest in the possible environmental impacts.

The motion carried 6 – 2 – 0 (Catlin and Dennis opposed).

13-G-19 Approval of a letter in opposition to HB 339 – Vehicle Laws – Bicycles – Required Use of Protective Headgear

A motion was made by Councilmember Afzali and seconded by Councilmember Day to oppose HB 339 - Vehicle Laws – Bicycles – Required Use of Protective Headgear.

There were no comments from the audience or from the Council.

The motion passed 8 – 0 – 0.

13-G-20 Approval of a letter in support of PG 420-13 – Prince George's County – School Facilities Surcharge

A motion was made by Councilmember Wojahn and seconded by Councilmember Catlin to support PG 420-13 - Prince George's County – School Facilities Surcharge, and the associated house and senate bills.

Councilmember Wojahn said we need to encourage transit oriented development; the more we have people living near our metro stations the less the additional density will have on our transportation infrastructure. It is critical to keep the detailed site plan in the process.

Councilmember Catlin said he can support this bill because it is for not more than a five-year period, in an effort to get things done quickly.

The motion passed 8 – 0 – 0.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Wojahn to adjourn the Special Session. With a vote of 8 – 0 – 0, the Special Session was adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller, CMC
City Clerk

Date
Approved